

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Indonesia is the world's largest archipelago, with a population of more than 270 million people spread across thousands of islands (Fatma Ulfatun Najicha and Muhammad Isya, 2024). The country's national identity is built on the diversity of its ethnic groups, races, regional languages, and cultures, with religion as one of the most influential elements in people's lives. The state officially recognizes six religions Islam, Catholicism, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism which together shape the nation's values, traditions, and character (Gunawan, Dariah, Yungan, Tosiani, and Purbo, 2017). This religious diversity is not a source of division but rather a shared spiritual and cultural asset, as reflected in the spirit of tolerance embodied in the national motto, "*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*". This tolerance is clearly evident in cities such as Semarang, the capital of Central Java Province, where people of various religions have lived side by side for several generations and where interfaith harmony is exceptionally high (Mardian, Mandaka, and Dian Susanti, 2023).

The diversity in Greater Semarang is reflected in the variety of places of worship, some of which have become religious tourist destinations visited by people of various faiths. Examples include the Assafinatun Najah "Ship" Mosque in Podorejo, whose design was inspired by the story of Prophet Noah (Palupiningtyas, Supriyadi, Yulianto, and Aletta, 2022); the Achmad bin Adenan Mosque, built from repurposed shipping containers; the Avalokitesvara Pagoda in Banyumanik, one of the tallest pagodas in Southeast Asia and a center for Buddhist religious activities (Mardian, Mandaka, and Dian Susanti, 2023); and the Kerep Ambarawa Cave in Ambarawa, a Catholic pilgrimage site known for its statues of Jesus and the Virgin Mary (Mardian, Mandaka, and Dian Susanti, 2023). These four sites serve as concrete examples of religious tolerance practiced in Greater Semarang, while also attracting local and international tourists from diverse religious backgrounds.

Despite their great potential, these destinations remain relatively unknown, even to some Semarang residents who have only heard of them but have never visited. Meylawati and Marhendi (2021) note that promotional efforts in the city are still not well-targeted and have not clearly conveyed the message to the intended audience. This lack of effective promotion limits public awareness of these destinations, even though their capacity allows them to accommodate more visitors.

The focus of promotion shifts toward digital platforms, conventional media such as print and television are playing a lesser role in tourism promotion. Fahrudin, Siti, and Herlina (2020) state that social media has become an effective channel for promoting tourist destinations, while Girsang and Himni (2025) note that platforms such as YouTube and Instagram are widely used by the younger generation to produce and access informative content. Short films have emerged as an effective promotional medium because they can convey messages, information, and values through visual and narrative elements (Desrianti, Supriati, and Herdiana, 2020), allowing the audience not only to receive information but also to experience the atmosphere and significance of a destination. This is demonstrated by Pamungkas's (2023) research through the production of a short film about Pura Agung Giri Natha in Semarang, which proves that storytelling-based short films can be an effective medium for promoting religious tourism.

However, the research by Pamungkas (2023) is still limited to Hindu religious tourism destinations, so there is an opportunity to develop similar promotional materials for other religions in Semarang. Therefore, this study focuses on three religions Islam, Catholicism, and Buddhism while Hinduism is excluded because it has already been addressed in previous research, and Protestant Christianity and Confucianism are excluded due to production time constraints and the limited availability of destinations with sufficiently distinctive visual and narrative appeal to be featured in a short film. From these three religions, four destinations were selected: the Avalokitesvara Pagoda, the Assafinatun Najah Mosque, the Achmad bin Adenan Mosque, and the Kerep Ambarawa Cave, as each possesses distinctive architectural or spiritual characteristics that represent its respective religion, while still allowing for documentation within the available time and resources.

In the production of a promotional film for religious tourism in Semarang, two places of worship were selected to represent Islam: the Ahmad Bin Adenan Mosque and the Assanafi'atun Najah Ship Mosque. This was because both possess distinct architectural characteristics and visual appeal, thereby enriching the portrayal of Islamic religious tourism; however, the condition of the Kapal Assanafi'atun Najah Mosque at the time of the field observation indicated a level of cleanliness and maintenance that was less than optimal compared to the Ahmad Bin Adenan Mosque; consequently, filming was conducted selectively, taking into account visual aesthetics as well as the objective of promoting religious tourism destinations that showcase the diversity of places of worship for Islam, Buddhism, and Catholicism in the city of Semarang. The selection of the Ahmad Bin Adenan Mosque and the Assanafi'atun Najah Ship Mosque was made to represent the diversity of Islamic religious tourism destinations in the city of Semarang. In addition to serving as places of worship, mosques also form part of the social and cultural spaces of the community. As explained by Santosa, R. B., Asy Syahid, M. A., Fadhil, M. N., Setiawan, W., & Mirsa, R. (2025), mosques in Indonesia have developed within a dynamic social context and possess diverse spatial and institutional affiliations.

Based on these opportunities, this study produced a short film titled "*Welas Asih DI Tengah Perbedaan*" as a promotional tool for the four religious tourist destinations mentioned above. This film is primarily aimed at students who have moved to Semarang to study at Diponegoro University, including domestic students from outside the region and international students, as well as people who have moved to Semarang for other reasons and those who have never visited the city. The film is distributed via YouTube and Instagram with English subtitles to aid international viewers' understanding. In addition to introducing these four destinations, the film aims to convey the values of tolerance and compassion, as well as to support local tourism by increasing visitor interest based on the understanding that religious diversity in Semarang is a shared treasure to be cherished.

1.2 Statements of the Problem

Based on the background described above, the researcher has identified the research question as follows:

1. How is the process of producing the short film “*Welas Asih Di Tengah Perbedaan*” as a promotional tool for religious tourism?
2. What are the responses and feedback from stakeholders, viewers, and other relevant parties regarding the promotional video “*Welas Asih Di Tengah Perbedaan*” as a tourism promotion tool to enhance its appeal to tourists?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

Based on the research question above, the objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To describe the production process of the short film “*Welas Asih Di Tengah Perbedaan*” as a medium for promoting religious tourism.
2. To identify the responses and feedback from stakeholders, viewers, and other relevant parties regarding the short film “*Welas Asih Di Tengah Perbedaan*” as a tourism promotion medium, with the aim of enhancing its appeal to tourists.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is expected to make both theoretical and practical contributions to the production and promotion of religious tourism through short films.

1.4.1 Theoretical Contribution

In theory, this research is expected to:

- a. Enrich the research on the representation of tolerance and interfaith harmony through the medium of film in the context of a multicultural society.
- b. Serve as a reference for future research related to the creation of audiovisual works as a medium for tourism promotion, particularly religious tourism.
- c. Provide insights into the application of cinematographic techniques in the creation of short films for tourism promotion, including the selection of camera angles, camera movement, and appropriate editing techniques.

1.4.2 Practical Contribution

In practical terms, this research is expected to:

- a. The Tourism Managers: Provide a new, attractive, and effective promotional medium for the managers of the Avalokitesvara Pagoda, the Kerep Ambarawa Cave, and the Assafinatun Najah Ship Mosque to increase visitor numbers
- b. The Community: To provide interesting and inspiring information about the beauty and uniqueness of religious tourist sites in the city of Semarang, while spreading a message about the importance of tolerance and harmony. For Academics and Students: To provide an example and a reference in the process of creating a short film as a scholarly work, from the conceptualization stage through to distribution via media platforms
- c. Creative Industry: To provide inspiration and a reference for young filmmakers and content creators in developing high-quality and meaningful tourism promotional video content.

1.5 Output

This research produced a 30-minute short film titled “*Welas Asih Di Tengah Perbedaan*” featuring four religious tourist destinations: the Avalokitesvara Pagoda, the Assanafitun Najah Mosque, the Achmad Bin Adenan Mosque, and the Keper Ambarawa Cave. This short film produced in Full HD resolution (1920x1080 pixels) using a SONY ZVE10 and a HOLLYLAND Lark 2 for the microphone. The researcher will distribute the short film on YouTube and Instagram as promotional platforms that are easily accessible to a wide audience.

This short film featured Indonesian audio with English subtitles, as the target audience includes not only domestic tourists but also international visitors who can enjoy and understand the film’s content. The use of voice-over in this film is intended to provide clear and informative content for viewers while conveying the beautiful message of interfaith tolerance at each religious tourist destination in Greater Semarang.